

fired. General Shinseki told the truth about how many troops would be needed in Iraq. He has been replaced.

In the Bush administration, it seems loyalty to the party line is more important than candor.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about important issues here, issues of war and peace, life and death. The American people deserve to know the truth. They deserve straight talk, not some intentionally muddled rationale created for political purposes. They deserve a lot better than they are getting from this administration.

AMERICORPS' OVERENROLLMENT AND QUESTIONABLE ACCOUNTING RECORDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, just as freedom and liberty are interwoven into the very fabric of our Nation, so too is the American pastime of volunteering. Recently, AmeriCorps' backers have been seeking an additional \$100 million in supplemental funding, but I believe we should look carefully at their request.

AmeriCorps was not able to place anywhere from 20,000 to 37,000 employees, volunteers, and this is based upon a statement from them, the Save AmeriCorps Coalition, on September 4, because of its own muddy accounting records and overenrollment. Basically, what they did was overhire 20,000 plus volunteers without authorization.

Of further interest, during the August recess we learned of the distribution of cash bonuses to 265 senior staff at the parent agency, which is the Corporation for National Community Service, CNCS. While the amounts are nominal to their overall budget, what is disturbing is the apparent lack of judgment from CNCS officials. This Congress has been engaged in over a year's worth of hearings and legislation on corporate misbehavior and disproportionate executive compensation in ailing companies. The public expresses outrage over such private sector firm actions and demands that Congress investigate and would probably refer to emergency funding, in the example of such firms as we have been examining, as a bailout. CNCS should be subject to no less scrutiny and adhere to no lower standards.

Some of us question Federal funding of community service in the first place. AmeriCorps pays people to volunteer. Remuneration in exchange for choosing to contribute one's time, energy and/or money would seem to belie the very definition of the word "volunteerism."

This country does indeed have many needs. Thankfully, through the work of volunteers, many of those needs are met and fulfilled every day. Americans share their hearts, weekends, muscles and wallets in a multitude of activities.

To this end, a recent exhortation by the Save AmeriCorps Coalition should be mentioned here. This is what they say, "Our generation is volunteering at unprecedented rates, making vital contributions to communities across the country through AmeriCorps. This opportunity, however, is at risk. Drastic cuts in Federal funding will result in the reduction of critical services for children, the elderly and hundreds of organizations that rely on AmeriCorps volunteers."

If AmeriCorps is suggesting volunteerism might collapse in the United States, one might forgive our skepticism. Reflect that America has relied on the contribution of volunteers for centuries. AmeriCorps has existed for all but a decade, whereas our Nation's charitable sector thrived since before its creation.

After visiting America for the first time, the French social commentator Alexis de Tocqueville said, "I have often admired the extreme skill with which the inhabitants of the United States succeed in proposing a common object to the exertions of a great many men, and in getting them voluntarily to pursue it." He wrote this in his book *Democracy in America*.

Further, analysis published in October 2003 in the Reason magazine article on AmeriCorps quantifies that according to AmeriCorps' and Bureau of Labor Statistics' numbers on volunteers both as members of AmeriCorps and as Americans on their own, "AmeriCorps cuts then represent about four-tenths of 1 percent of total American volunteer hours."

Even those of us who see the benefit in some Federal role in civic service question some of the endeavors in which AmeriCorps volunteers over the years have participated. While some of the activities undertaken by AmeriCorps members may be meritorious, AmeriCorps also has a history of participating in some activities of questionable value.

That these programs may be described as worthy to some, while questionable to others, might be a needless debate at all were not the taxpayers who are being charged in the first place for this volunteer work. For a decade now, members on both sides of our aisle have sought to legislate whether AmeriCorps members could spend time with political activities, campaigns, faith-based initiatives or unions. If the Federal Government were not involved in what should be a personal preference in the first place, we would not have to have these discussions in the first place. Any American, go volunteer where he or she wants, end of message.

Let us celebrate the pure volunteerism that occurs in our communities every day. Let us encourage it to flourish just as it was 200 years ago, selflessly and generously, from the heart.

THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE FAILED PEACE PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to address the tragic situation in the Middle East and the failed peace process. It is obvious to all that the continued dispatching of these so-called suicide or homicide bombers into civilian Israeli targets like buses and restaurants is intended to prevent any peaceful resolution of the Palestinian problem.

For any peace process to work, both parties involved must want peace. The Palestinian Authority and Mr. Arafat have demonstrated that they do not want to end and they are unwilling and incapable of preventing this ongoing violence against Israeli civilians.

The repeated call by Mr. Arafat for martyrs by the millions, reiterated by him again last week, should be a stark reminder to us all that we cannot work with him or the beliefs he represents. There can be no real peace when these are the sentiments of this man's heart. Let us not delude ourselves.

Ariel Sharon's primary responsibility, and the primary responsibility of the Israeli government, above and beyond everything else is to maintain the safety and security of its people. While the opinions of European ministers, the U.S. Government and our State Department are important, they are not more important than the lives of women and children.

Now is the time to acknowledge that Oslo has been a terrible failure and the road map is not working. Hundreds of Israelis are dead and buried as a testimony to this fact. Many more are left to face a lifetime of painful disability.

I feel strongly that the Israeli government should be supported in doing whatever it takes to protect its people. If this includes expelling Arafat so be it. If it includes completing the fence, so be it. Whatever is necessary to defend itself and protect its people.

Our State Department was recently quoted as saying that expelling Arafat will not be helpful. I strongly disagree. It may prove to be very helpful. It might end these attacks on Israeli civilians, and what is more, it could be very helpful to the Palestinians themselves.

Since Arafat's return in 1993, the Palestinian economy has shrunk by 70 percent, while at the same time the Israeli economy has doubled. There is widespread corruption and no freedom of speech in the Palestinian-controlled territories. Any Palestinian who openly criticizes Arafat or the Authority's policy is killed. Removing this man and the evil and corrupt regime around him could be the best thing for the peace process.

I know I do not stand alone in these sentiments and that a majority of this House, the Senate and the American

people will support Israel in this. Certainly, the American people expect our leaders to do whatever it takes to protect our people.

Witness what is happening today. In response to the attacks of 9/11, we have waged all-out war, first attacking Afghanistan, then Iraq. Did America rise up and say we need to negotiate with bin Laden and develop a peace process? No.

The American people understand that there is no negotiating with blood-thirsty murderers. The only road to peace and safety is the obliteration of al Qaeda and the regimes that aid it. President Bush said: "Every Nation has a choice to make. In this conflict there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril."

I could not agree with the President more. If this is the standard for America, why should it not be the same for another country? To deny Israel the right to do what it takes to defend itself is to deny Israel the right to exist and to turn our back on an ally and over 50 years of U.S. policy.

We must allow Israel to pursue the same goals for its people that we want for ourselves, the right to live in freedom peace and prosperity. We must stop defending and supporting this brutal, dysfunctional Palestinian Authority and its leader Arafat.

□ 1300

I agree with all those who say we may never end this war on terror until a solution to the Palestinian problem is found. However, negotiating with vicious murderers who seek the destruction of Israel is no solution. It only worsens the problem.

Let us give Ariel Sharon and the Israeli government the freedom to do what is right, to defend and protect their people.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 1 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: Lord of history, we know You were with the Framers of our Constitution. Be with us here and now.

Be present to Your people across this Nation as they gather for community affairs, business and to pray.

The strength of this Nation has always been shown in its spirit. This free society is always at its best when in the face of diversity or adversity, we show tolerance, understanding, and compassion.

Before You, the task of building strong relationships comes from honest communication rooted in the silence of deep convictions. Trust grows with kind words and consistent behavior.

Mindful of our freedom, let us choose to water the seeds of tolerance, understanding and compassion in ourselves and in our children.

Then we will become the people the Founders envisioned and become a sign of hope for the world.

You, Lord, hold us together in the present moment and forever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CALVERT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

DISPENSING WITH CALL OF PRIVATE CALENDAR ON TODAY

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the call of the Private Calendar be dispensed with today.

The SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

RICHMOND'S LITTLE CHAMPIONS

(Mr. DELAY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I want to take a moment to recognize the members of the 2003 Lamar Little League all-stars from Richmond, Texas, for their sterling performance in the Little League World Series.

First of all, I want to commend Jim Michalek, the team's dedicated manager for his magnificent leadership.

Mr. Michalek and his coaches, Tim Hollek and Tom Staudt, devoted an enormous amount of time and effort to these young men. They made this team their lives for the summer of 2003, and the team's success is a testament to their dedication.

As for the boys themselves, Brian Foster, Randal Alexander Grichuk, Brandon Hollek, Marcus Martinez, Jimmy Michalek, Robert Psenka, Cody Robinson, Brady Rogers, Eli Sepulveda, Chris Smith, Garrett Austin Staudt, and Wayne Willis, they did Richmond and Fort Bend County proud this year and gave us a series to remember.

After that heroic battle with the kids from Saugus, Massachusetts, it will be a long while before the rest of the Nation forgets what the Richmond all-stars are made of.

I am honored to represent these young men and their families. Their determination and dedication is an inspiration, an example to Texans of all ages.

Over the course of this spring and summer, the Richmond all-stars have refined their characters along with their batting swings. They have learned the virtues of teamwork, virtues that will make them better boys, and one day, better men.

Competing in team sports teaches children the virtues of honesty, perseverance, loyalty, and courage; and doing so in the name of their hometown instills in them a sense of civic pride as well.

More than that, they have helped instill that very pride in all of us, their fans, who watched and cheered their amazing march to Williamsport.

No matter what the scoreboard said at the end of the game, the Richmond, Texas, Little Leaguers of 2003 will always be our champions.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

(Mr. MICHAUD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, it has been 859 days since President Bush and the Republican Party embarked on their economic plan of our country. During that time the national debt has increased by \$1,169,750,943,211.93. According to the Web site for the Bureau of Public Debt at the U.S. Treasury yesterday at 4:30 p.m. eastern daylight time the national outstanding debt was \$6,810,076,329,570.70.

Furthermore, in fiscal year 2003, interest on our national debt, or the "debt tax" is \$304,978,878,641.11 through August 31.

VOTE ON JUDGE WILLIAM PRYOR

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, our judicial system is under attack. The weapon of choice? The filibuster.

As cases back up in the Federal courts, some politicians are using the filibuster to prevent a vote on several highly-qualified, well-respected judicial nominees, and one of these nominees is William Pryor, highly-principled and well-qualified nominee for the Federal bench. Opponents to his nomination say that his personal views